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ABSTRACT

A total of 615 of the 11,000 participants at the 1995 Illinois Association of School Board's 1995 convention responded to a 15-question survey that included questions pertaining to the following issues: Illinois' Education-to-Careers initiative; federal funding; employability/life skill development; education, business, industry, and labor partnerships; role of the Illinois Council on Vocational Education; and school leavers. Most survey respondents were school board members representing unit (K-12) or elementary (K-8) districts throughout Illinois. Program administrators, spouses, and others were also among the respondents to the survey. Awareness of Illinois' Education-to-Careers initiative and the difference between school- and work-based learning initiatives appeared relatively high; however, only 19% of administrators considered work-based learning experiences an important part of students' learning before graduation. Most respondents were aware of federal block grant proposals. Large percentages of respondents believed that local needs should be the most important criteria for distributing block grant funds. Most administrators indicated that their districts offer various life skills programs; however, board members, spouses, and others were less likely to be aware of such programs. Levels of school-business-labor partnerships appeared to be increasing. (Fourteen tables/figures are included. Appended are the survey instrument and a 15-item reference/suggested readings list.) (MN)

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ED 396 148

PROFESSIONALS' VIEWS ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FROM A 1995 ILLINOIS SURVEY

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Professionals' Views on Workforce Development: Implications from a 1995 Illinois Survey

The Illinois Council on Vocational Education appreciates the cooperation of professionals who offered their perceptions of issues affecting vocational-technical education.

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INTRODUCTION

> *To the ancient Greeks Dia-logos meant a free-flowing of meaning through a group, allowing the group to discover insights not attainable individually... Today, the principles and practices of dialogue are being rediscovered and put into a contemporary context (pg. 10).*
>
> (Peter Senge, The Fifth Discipline)

The Illinois Council on Vocational Education (ICoVE) has maintained its long-standing tradition of providing advice and assistance to various constituencies interested in preparing youth and adults for work. The twelve members of ICoVE are committed to reaching out to representatives of the public and private sectors to assess their perceptions of the critical issues affecting Illinois' initiatives in workforce development.

On November 16-18, 1995, ICoVE surveyed participants attending the 63rd annual convention of the Illinois Association of School Boards, Illinois Association of School Administrators, and Illinois Association of School Business Officials. More than 11,000 participants attended the convention and were given the opportunity to offer their perceptions of issues affecting vocational-technical education in Illinois.

This report presents a summary of the perceptions of more than 600 conference participants addressing thematic issues such as

- ⇒ Education-to-Careers
- ⇒ federal funding
- ⇒ employability/life skill development
- ⇒ education, business, industry and labor partnerships
- ⇒ role of ICoVE
- ⇒ school leavers

This report is a document intended to guide and facilitate educational decision-making and dialogue. The collective contribution of Illinois citizens responding to the survey will set the framework for ICoVE's annual recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On November 16-18, 1995, members and staff of the Illinois Council on Vocational Education (ICoVE) surveyed participants attending the 63rd annual convention of the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB). The conclusions and recommendations listed summarize the perceptions of more than 600 participants. Convention participants were asked to address thematic issues associated with Education to Careers; changes in federal funding; employability/life skills development; education, business, industry and labor partnerships; the role of ICoVE; and school leavers.

Most of the respondents to the ICoVE survey were board members representing unit (K-12) or elementary (K-8)) districts. Board members from these districts represented 44% of the survey population. Other respondents included district administrators, spouses and other convention participants.

Data are provided in the analysis of each of the items asked on the 15-item ICoVE questionnaire. The following summarizes major conclusions:

EDUCATION-TO-CAREERS

- The level of awareness regarding the state's Education-to-Careers initiative appeared to be fairly high. However, administrators were more likely to be aware of this initiative than were board members, spouses and others who responded to the ICoVE survey.

- All survey respondents recognized the important need for youth and adults to further their education by enrolling in advanced postsecondary education/training.

- School board members, administrators and other IASB convention participants recognized that it is not necessary to prepare all youth and adults for a four-year degree.

- There was a high level of awareness among survey respondents of the difference between school- and work-based learning initiatives. However, it was unclear whether participants view school- and work-based learning experiences as being beyond those more traditionally offered in the schools.

- Except for administrators, most survey respondents believed students should have work-based learning experiences prior to receiving a high school diploma. Only 19% of administrators believed work-based experiences are an important part of students' learning prior to graduation.

FEDERAL FUNDING

- Participants attending the IASB convention were generally aware of federal block grant proposals designed to change the way funding is allocated to states and local agencies for education and training.

- A large percentage of respondents believed federal funds distributed through a block grant mechanism should use local need as the most important criteria for that allocation. To a much lesser extent, the state should use specific criteria, specific programs, educational level and agency affiliation as criteria for the distribution of block grant funds.

EMPLOYABILITY/LIFE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- The majority of administrators responding to the ICoVE survey indicated that their districts offer various life skills programs such as balancing family and work, crisis prevention and interpersonal relationships. However, board members, spouses and others were less likely to have knowledge of their districts offering these types of programs.

- The majority of survey respondents indicated that the schools teach effective skills associated with punctuality and attendance. Ironically, administrators were less likely to identify that their schools taught these skills than were board members, spouses and others.

EDUCATION, BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND LABOR PARTNERSHIPS

- The majority of survey respondents identified the existence of partnerships between education, business, industry and labor. Data showed increased levels of partnership activity when contrasted with previous ICoVE surveys.

- While a sizable number of respondents indicated that teachers receive inservice for help in establishing and maintaining partnerships in the schools, slightly more than one-third of the administrators reported inservice activity was not occurring.

ROLE OF ICOVE

- Almost one-quarter of the respondents to the survey believed ICoVE's role involves monitoring, providing advice and assistance, and coordinating state activities associated with vocational education.

- The large number of respondents requesting further information about the state's Education-to-Careers initiative and vocational education suggested a continuing interest in learning more about their respective agencies' roles in employment and training activity.

SCHOOL LEAVERS

- The majority of respondents to the ICoVE survey believed students must receive a high school diploma in order to receive and retain a driver's license.

- Administrators were less likely to believe that completion of a high school diploma should be required to receive a driver's license.

Several recommendations are being made by the Illinois Council on Vocational Education. These recommendations (described more fully on pages 11-15) are designed to address the perceptions of respondents completing the survey at the IASB convention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- While progress is being made with efforts to implement the Education-to-Careers initiative, ICoVE members recommend that the state aggressively support awareness and marketing activities which clarify the various components of this initiative and the strategies intended to make it successful. Marketing efforts should include information that outlines the breadth of strategies being employed to support school- and work-based learning.

- ICoVE members recommend that state and local officials involved with the Education-to-Careers initiative continue to focus on the important role of the schools in the delivery of career development programs provided for the state's youth. Elementary and secondary school students must get the career information they need in order to understand the relationship between school and labor market success.

- ICoVE members recommend that educational agencies at all levels work closely with the Human Resource Investment Council which has been established to coordinate efforts of existing agencies involved in job training and preparation. ICoVE members believe it will be important for there to be close connections between the educational community and the Council to ensure that schools continue to play a meaningful role in the broader employment and training community.

- ICoVE members recommend that schools continue to be cognizant of the important role they play in helping youth and adults succeed at work, in the home and in their community. Every effort should be made to incorporate employability and life skills preparation into the educational programs in Illinois' schools. The development of a relevant school curriculum entails a holistic approach to education which builds upon the unique interests, abilities and aptitudes of youth and adults. Schooling is the connection of all of the academic, vocational and extracurricular experiences which help young people prepare for their various adult roles.

- ICoVE members recommend that state-level agencies involved in elementary, secondary and postsecondary education continue to encourage local agencies to establish creative partnerships among education, government, business, industry and labor. Inservice activities should be supported to assist teachers, counselors and administrators to understand their role in establishing and maintaining meaningful partnerships.

- The ICoVE members should continue to aggressively pursue their role in monitoring, providing advice and assisting in coordinating the state's education and training activity.

- ICoVE members recommend that an extensive review be completed of various proposals associated with encouraging youth to complete their high school education. ICoVE encourages completion of high school education for retention of a driver's license.

ICoVE members appreciate the support and commitment of educators at all levels in discussions associated with the state's education and training activity. Participation by the large number of convention participants suggests continuing interest on the part of educators to learn more about the role of their respective agencies in new school-to-work and other workforce preparation initiatives.

METHODOLOGY/RESPONDENT PROFILE

METHODOLOGY

Since 1988, the Illinois Council on Vocational Education (ICoVE) has conducted a study to identify emerging issues in vocational education. The study has been conducted in conjunction with the annual Illinois Association of School Board's (IASB) convention. The IASB convention is the largest state-level gathering of school decision makers in Illinois. Participants at the convention include members of the IASB, the Illinois Association of School Business Officials, the Illinois Association of School Administrators, spouses and others attending the meeting. In 1995, more than 11,000 participants involved with education at all levels participated in the convention. Participation in the ICoVE survey has increased steadily during its eight-year history with a low of approximately 100 respondents in 1988 to more than 600 in 1995.

ICoVE members and staff developed the survey questionnaire distributed at the IASB convention. The 15-question survey (shown in Appendix A) addressed several issues such as the state's Education-to-Careers initiative, federal funding and employability/life skill development.

To administer the survey instrument, ICoVE representatives staffed a booth in the exhibit area for the IASB convention. During the convention, participants were provided an opportunity to review the exhibits. Members and staff of ICoVE distributed the questionnaire to board members, administrators and their guests and asked for their assistance in completing the survey questionnaire. At the same time, ICoVE members and staff had an opportunity to speak with participants about issues affecting vocational education and the broader employment and training community.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

A total of 615 IASB convention participants completed the ICoVE questionnaire during the period November 16-18, 1995. Participants included board members, administrators, spouses land others. Table I provides data associated with the type of school districts the participants represented.

Table I

RESPONDENTS BY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Survey Participants	Unit (K-12)	Elementary (K-8)	Secondary (K-12)	Unknown/ Other	Total
Board Members	176	93	24	46	339
Administrators	56	13	16	20	105
Spouses	54	16	9	24	103
Other	8	3	12	45	68

n = 615

Most of the respondents in the ICoVE survey were board members representing unit (K-12) or elementary (K-8) districts. Board members from these two types of districts represented 44%

of the respondent population. Figure 1 shows the distribution of survey respondents by position.

Board members represented 55% of the survey population, administrators and spouses 17% each of the survey population, and others attending the convention represented 11% of those completing the questionnaire.

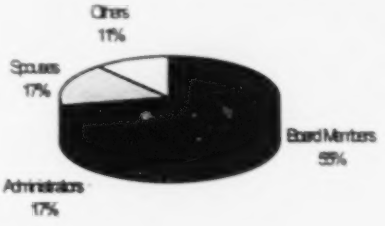

Figure 1. Survey Respondents by Position

While not a random sample, respondents to the ICoVE survey represented more than 5% of the total number of respondents attending the IASB convention. Participation by a sizable number of respondents suggests interest among school personnel at all levels on issues associated with workforce preparation. This interest may reflect the pressures schools feel to train and retrain Illinois' workforce.

The following sections of this report present survey data related to the following thematic issues:

- Education-to-Careers
- federal funding
- employability/life skill development
- education, business, industry and labor partnerships
- role of ICoVE
- school leavers

EDUCATION-TO-CAREERS

On May 4, 1994, President Clinton signed into law the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. The Law enables states and local communities to form creative partnerships to increase the potential for youth and adults to further their education toward the ultimate goal of high-skill, high-wage careers.

In Illinois, state education officials have identified this as the Education-to-Careers initiative. The three basic components of the legislation focus on: work-based learning such as paid or unpaid work experience, workplace mentoring and job shadowing; school-based learning such as career counseling and selection of career majors; and connecting activities such as training for teachers, counselors and workplace mentors, development of job placement services, and coordination between students and employers. Elementary and secondary schools, community colleges and universities play a major role in addressing these school-to-work components.

The 1995 ICoVE survey asked respondents five questions associated with the Education-to-Careers initiative. Those questions focused on participant awareness, the postsecondary education and training needs of Illinois' youth, and awareness of school- and work-based

learning initiatives. Figure 2 shows the survey respondents' awareness of the state's Education-to-Careers initiative.

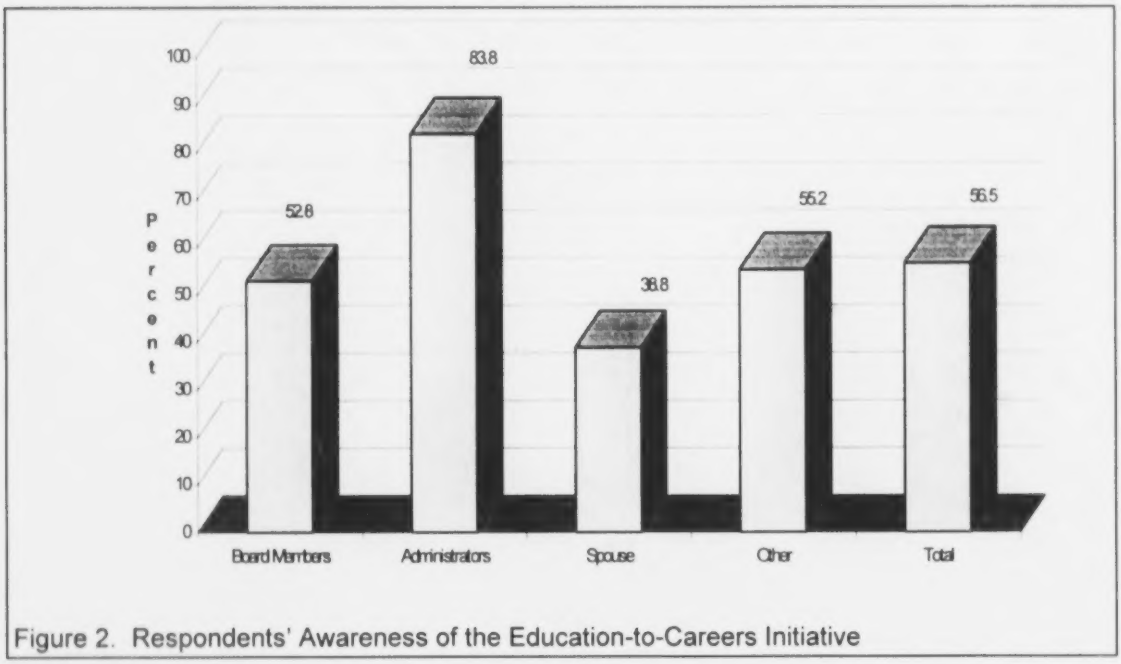

Figure 2. Respondents' Awareness of the Education-to-Careers Initiative

More than 50% of the individuals responding to the ICoVE survey were aware of the state's Education-to-Careers initiative. When examining data more closely, it appears administrators were more likely to be aware of the initiative than were board members, spouses and other respondents.

In the comments section of the survey instrument, it appears that responses to this question may be complicated by varying definitions of the Education-to-Careers concept. Comments suggested some respondents narrowly define the Education-to-Careers initiative in various programmatic contexts associated with work-based and school-based activity such as Tech Prep, youth apprenticeship and cooperative education. Other respondents seemed to view the initiative as a process which spans a continuum of lifelong connections between education and training at all levels.

Figure 3 identifies respondents' perceptions of the need for postsecondary education and training and the need to prepare high school-age youth for a four-year degree.

More than 70% of the respondents (75.2% of administrators) recognized that the state's youth and adults will require some degree of postsecondary education/training after high school. However, less than 25% (22.9% in total) of respondents believed all students should prepare for a four-year college degree. One respondent commented, "Kids in schools should be made aware that there are jobs/careers out there that do not require a college degree."

These data are consistent with national reports such as *America's Choice: High Skills-Low Wages* (1990), which indicates that future positions in the labor market will require that youth

and adults receive some form of postsecondary education and training. However, the number of jobs requiring a baccalaureate degree will remain relatively consistent over the next decade.

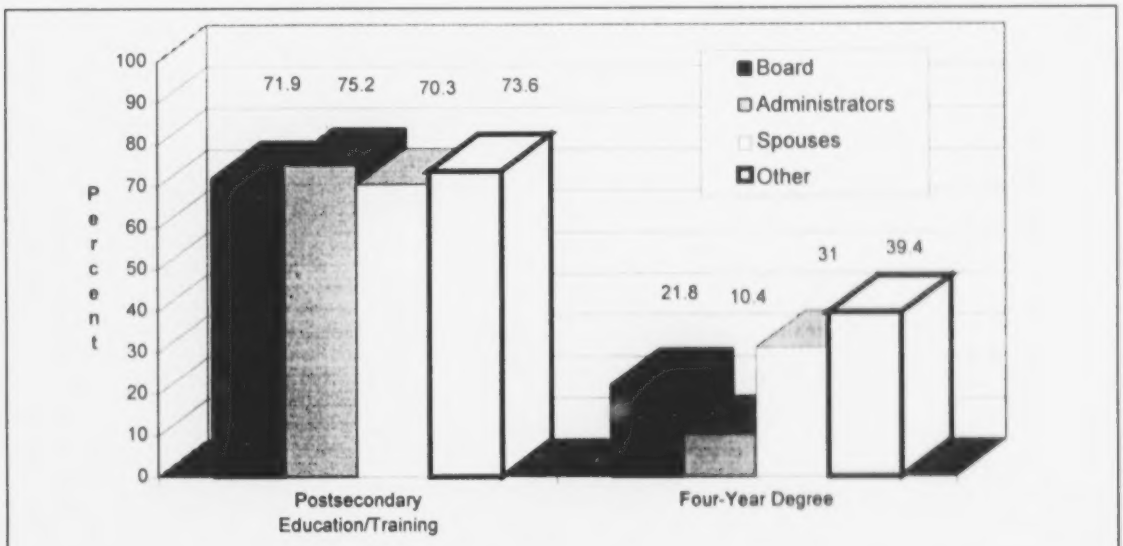

Figure 3. Respondents' Perceptions of the Need for Postsecondary Education/Training and to Prepare for a Four-Year Degree

School-based and work-based learning are two of the three basic components of the new School-to-Work Opportunities Act. Figure 4 identifies the survey respondents' levels of understanding of school- and work-based learning initiatives.

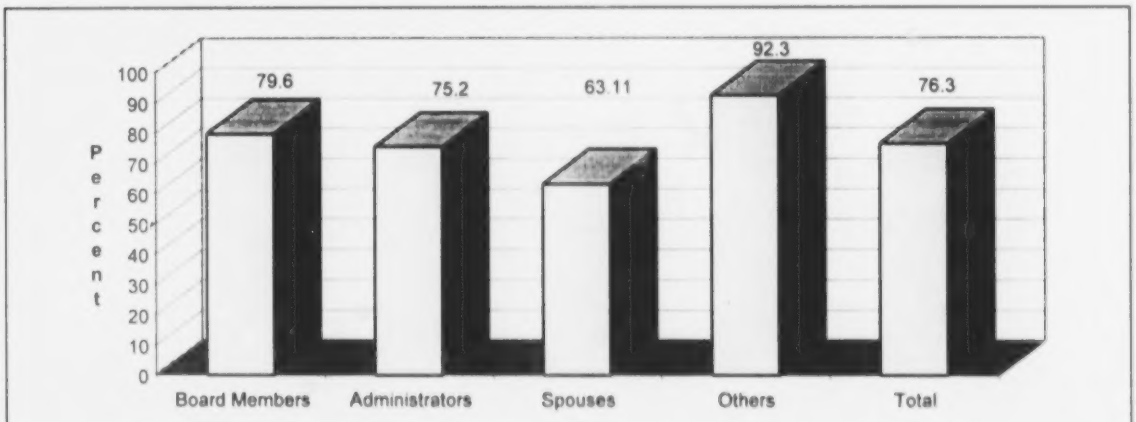

Figure 4. Respondents' Understanding of School-Based and Work-Based Learning Initiatives

More than three quarters of the respondents to the survey indicated that they recognized the difference between school-based and work-based learning initiatives. However, these data do not necessarily mean that all respondents clearly understood these initiatives.

Comments on the survey instrument suggested that some respondents associate work-based learning activities with the traditional cooperative education experiences which have been offered by schools for many years. Other comments suggested that some respondents equate school-based learning with more narrow vocationalism. However, the Education-to-Careers initiative goes well beyond notions associated with traditional delivery of vocational education.

The final ICoVE question associated with the state's Education-to-Careers initiative assessed the extent to which respondents believed that students should have a work-based experience prior to graduation. Those data are shown in Figure 5.

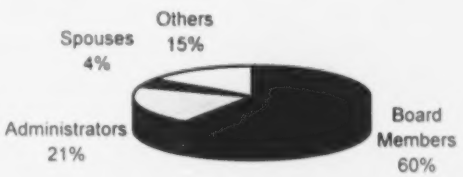

Figure 5. Respondents Who Believe Students Should Have a Work-Based Experience Prior to Graduation

Fifty-one percent of the respondents to the survey instrument believed students should have a work-based experience prior to graduation. Of that number, 54% of board members, 19% of administrators, and much lower percentages of spouses and other respondents believed work-based experiences are necessary. While a sizable number of board members responding believed that work-based experiences are essential, only 19% of administrators responding to the survey had similar beliefs. Again, this may be due in part to misconceptions about the broad use of the term work-based learning.

Individuals making comments on the ICoVE survey noted that the ability of a district to provide a work-based experience to all students is difficult, particularly in the state's rural areas. Other comments suggest there were varying degrees of understanding of the extent to which work-based learning activities would take time away from students learning of "the basics."

FEDERAL FUNDING

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education and Applied Technology Education Act was scheduled for reauthorization by Congress in 1995. At the time of writing this report, members of Congress have proposed repealing this Act and restructuring the delivery of funds for various employment and training activities through block grant programs to states.

Two different bills in the House and Senate recommend consolidating vocational education (and more than 100 other education and training programs) into block grants to the states. Reportedly, these grants would allow the state governors and local communities flexibility and increased responsibility in the administration of federal tax dollars allocated for employment and training activities. While the provisions of the House and Senate bills are quite different, it is clear Congress intends to give the state governors more responsibility in designing employment and training systems that respond to the needs of their states.

Two of the ICoVE survey questions asked respondents to address issues associated with proposed block grants for education and training programs. Figure 6 shows the level of respondent awareness of the federal block grant funding mechanism.

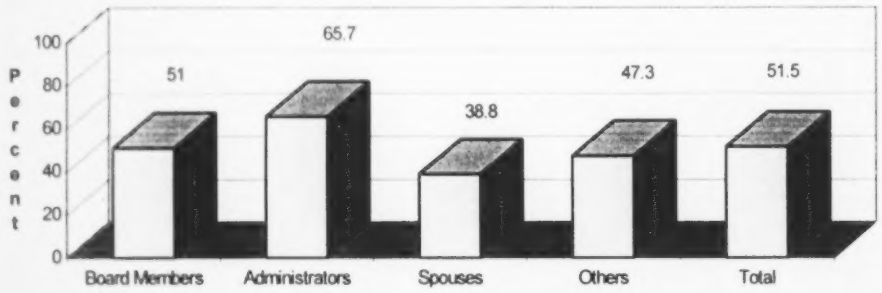

Figure 6. Respondents' Awareness of Federal Block Grant Proposals

In total, more than 50% of the respondents were aware of the federal block grant proposals as a funding mechanism for education. More than 65% of the administrators were aware of these proposals. To a lesser extent, board members, spouses and other respondents recognized that funding mechanisms would change.

ICoVE questions were not intended to address advocacy for or against block grant proposals. However, when legislation is passed to either reauthorize or repeal the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act, it is important for individuals representing the education community to be involved in setting the structure for the distribution of federal funds for various education and training programs. The first step in that process is an awareness that change in the funding mechanism will most certainly occur. Figure 7 identifies how respondents believed block grant funds might be allocated to local educational agencies.

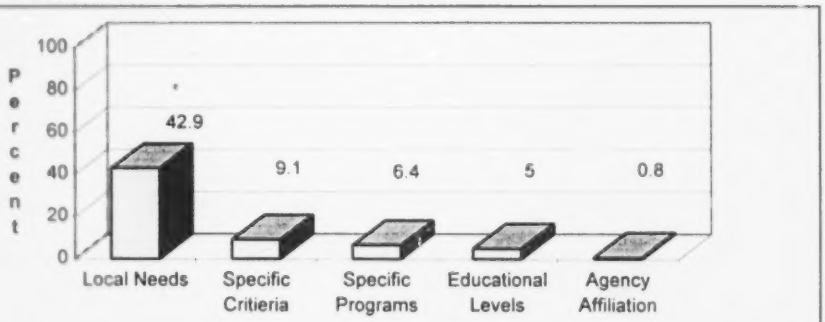

Figure 7. Administrators' Perceptions of How to Allocate Block Grant Funds

Pending appropriation of block grant funds, respondents were asked to identify what percentages of these funds should be allocated based on local needs, educational needs, specific criteria, agency affiliation, specific programs and other factors. Slightly more than 40% of respondents believed block grant funds should be distributed based on local need. To a much lesser extent, respondents believed block grant funds should be allocated based on specific criteria, specific programs, educational level or agency affiliation. One respondent

commented, "I hope the state and feds leave the local board with the control they need to have."

The vocational education community has expressed concern about the amount of block grant funding that will be provided for vocational education and the extent to which that funding may be significantly less than the amount currently received from the Perkins Act appropriation. It appeared that most respondents hope the mechanism used to allocate block grant funds provides sufficient flexibility for local agencies to become more directly involved in the use of federal tax dollars allocated for various education and training programs.

EMPLOYABILITY/LIFE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

In June 1991, the U. S. Department of Labor issued a major national report of the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). The SCANS report was based on an examination of the implications of changes in the workplace for schools. The report notes that schools have increasing responsibility for preparing people to make a living, participating in their communities and raising their families. The SCANS report identified five competencies and three foundation skills/personal qualities essential for solid job performance. Those competencies and foundation skills comprise the knowledge skills and attitudes that are essential for America's workforce.

Over the years, ICoVE surveys at the annual school board convention have asked questions associated with the extent to which board members and others believed in the importance of skills associated with employability and life skill development. These questions have addressed issues essential for helping youth and adults to succeed as a family member and as a participant in the workforce and community. Two of the questions on the 1995 ICoVE survey addressed these issues.

Figure 8 shows the extent to which administrators indicated that their districts offer life skills programs such as balancing family and work, crisis prevention, interpersonal relationships, and managing time, energy and financial resources.

More than 50% of the elementary school administrators responding to the ICoVE survey indicated their districts offer life skills programs. More than 60% of the administrators of secondary and unit districts offer programs of this type. Board members, spouses and other respondents were less likely than administrators to be aware that their schools offered life skills programs of the type identified on the ICoVE survey instrument.

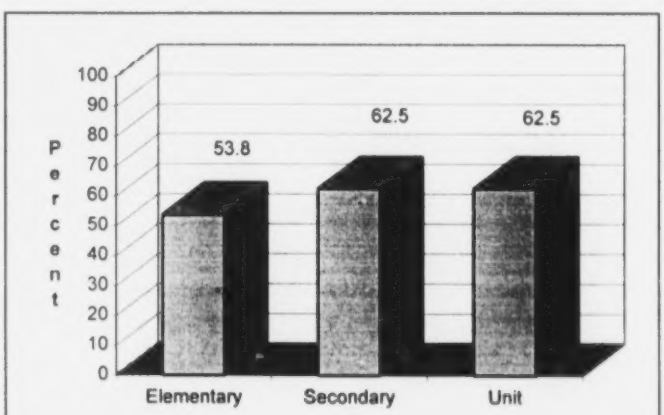

Figure 8. Administrators' Report of Districts Offering Life Skills Programs

Figure 9 identifies the extent to which all respondents believed schools teach principles associated with two specific employability skills -- punctuality and attendance.

Almost 80% of the respondents believed their schools teach employability skills associated with punctuality and attendance. Administrators were much less likely (50-60%) to indicate their districts taught these skills than were board members, spouses and other respondents. Almost one-third (30.4%) of administrators indicated these skills were not taught.

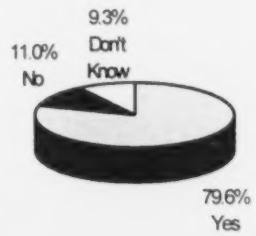

Figure 9. Extent to Which Schools Teach Principles Associated with Punctuality and Attendance

By far, the largest number of comments on the ICoVE survey instrument address themes associated with employability/ life skill development. Key words in the comments such as instilling good work ethic, respect, responsibility, pride in work to be done and attitude suggested that educators at all levels recognized the important need to provide youth and adults with the effective skills necessary for an individual to be a good worker. These comments are consistent with the report of the SCANS Commission. Other major federal and state reports suggest the demands of workers are different now than they had once been. These changes have implications for programs which connect learning and work.

EDUCATION, BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND LABOR PARTNERSHIPS

Rapid changes in technology, shifts in the organization of the modern-day workplace and the demands of a global marketplace have fostered growing discussions about the connection between learning and work. Much has been written about the need for linkages between and among agencies concerned about workforce, economic and community development. In much of the federal and state discussions about employment and training, two underlying themes are clear: a well-prepared workforce will both assist existing businesses and attract new businesses, and business and industry are willing to share in the responsibility of preparing youth and adults for work.

Representatives of education, business and labor have worked hard and have expressed a commitment to the development of partnerships with one another. However, until this year ICoVE surveys had been unable to identify that workable school partnerships had moved from the margin to the mainstream. In the 1994 ICoVE survey, most respondents were unable to identify extensive education, business, industry and labor partnerships that benefited their respective districts. Figure 10 shows the extent to which 1995 respondents perceived that partnerships have been established.

More than 50% of respondents to the ICoVE survey indicated that their schools have formed partnerships with business, industry and labor. These data show increased involvement from previous ICoVE surveys. Some of these increases may be attributed to recent policies

formulated in response to federal school-to-work legislation or changes in the local partner networks structured around Job Training Partnership Act service delivery areas. For whatever reason, it is clear that schools recognize the need for cooperative planning and delivery strategies which take advantage of the unique strengths and capabilities of those agencies and organizations, public and private, which prepare youth and adults for work.

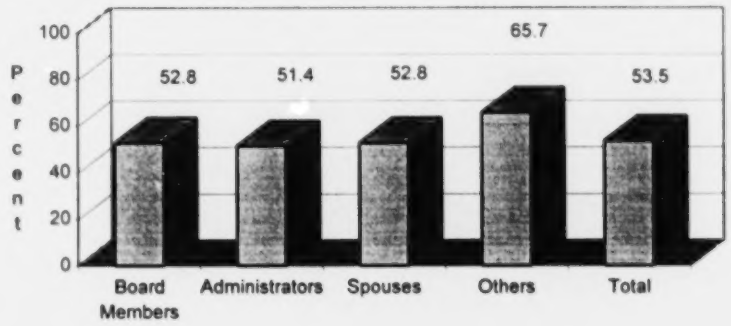

Figure 10. Respondents' Perceptions of the Extent to Which Partnerships Have Been Established

Figure 11 shows the extent to which teachers receive inservice to help them establish and maintain education, business, industry and labor partnerships.

Slightly more than 44% of respondents believed teachers in schools receive inservice to help them establish and maintain partnerships with the private sector. However, these data may be deceiving.

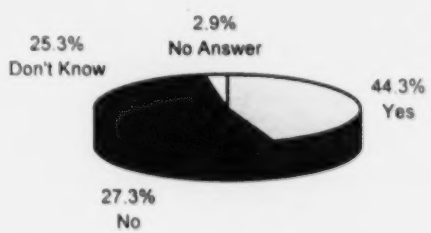

Figure 11. Extent to Which Teachers Receive Inservice on Establishing/Maintaining Partnerships

As a group, administrators were much less likely (38%) to indicate that inservice is actually provided to assist teachers to establish and maintain meaningful partnerships. Comments on the ICoVE questionnaire suggest that individuals in rural areas believe their ability to develop meaningful partnerships is limited. One participant noted, "Small industry will not have the time to be involved."

The State is allocating considerable resources to encourage local districts to establish linkages with business and labor. The new Local Partnership Planning Grant program is one of several programs designed to link learning and work. It seems clear that additional staff development will be necessary to assist teaches and administrators as they work more closely with the private sector.

ROLE OF ICoVE

The Illinois Council on Vocational Education (ICoVE) is authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Act. This law provides federal assistance for vocational education, focusing funding on improving vocational education and in particular, vocational education and services for members of special populations. The Act requires that each state establish a state council on vocational education independent of state boards, agencies and individuals fulfilling an advisory role to assist in the development of the state's vocational education program.

The 1995 ICoVE survey asked respondents to identify they role the see ICoVE playing in K-12 and postsecondary vocational education. Respondents were asked to identify the degree to which ICoVE should be involved in oversight of programs, advisory activity, monitoring of programs, overall coordination, program administration or other related activity. Figure 12 identifies the respondents' perceptions of the role of ICoVE.

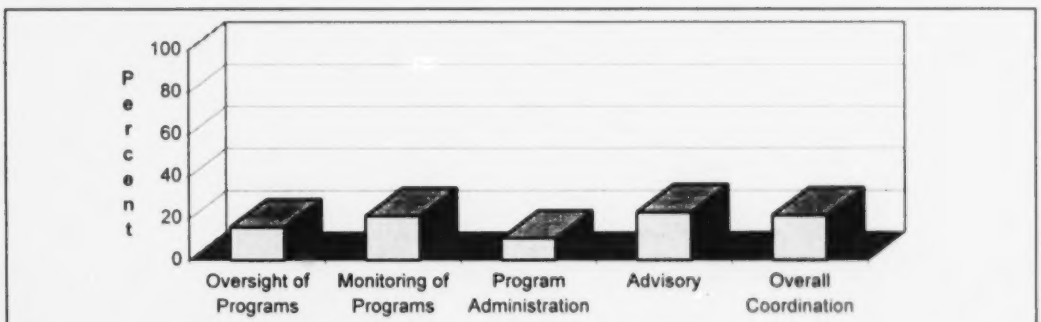

Figure 12. Respondents' Perceptions of the Role of ICoVE

About 20% of all respondents believed the role of ICoVE is to monitor, provide advice and assist in coordinating the state's vocational education activity. To a lesser extent, respondents believed ICoVE should be involved in oversight (15.9%) and administrative (10.4%) activity.

Clearly, current ICoVE members (shown on inside front cover) have a federally-mandated role which is consistent with that identified by most respondents to the ICoVE survey. Almost one-third (29.9%) of respondents asked ICoVE members and staff at the convention booth to provide them with more information about the state's Education-to-Careers initiative and/or vocational education. This would suggest a continuing interest in issues associated with workforce preparation by board members, administrators, spouses and others attending the convention.

SCHOOL LEAVERS

Various federal and state reports have brought attention to the academic and vocational preparation of high school graduates. At the same time, many of these reports discussed problems associated with the sizable percentage of young adults who will not complete high school. These reports provide evidence to show that students who do not complete high school have a difficult time finding productive and satisfying work. Recent data show that the annual

earnings of high school dropouts are lower than for those students who complete high school or postsecondary education and training. Reports such as *America's Choice: High Skills-Low Wages* (1990) show quite clearly that high school dropouts can expect lower annual earnings than their counterparts who have a diploma.

Federal and state officials have suggested several proposals to encourage youth to complete their high school education. One of these proposals would require high school students to receive and retain a high school diploma or reach the age of 18 in order to obtain a driver's license. Figure 13 shows the extent to which survey respondents believed such a proposal would help reduce Illinois' dropout rate.

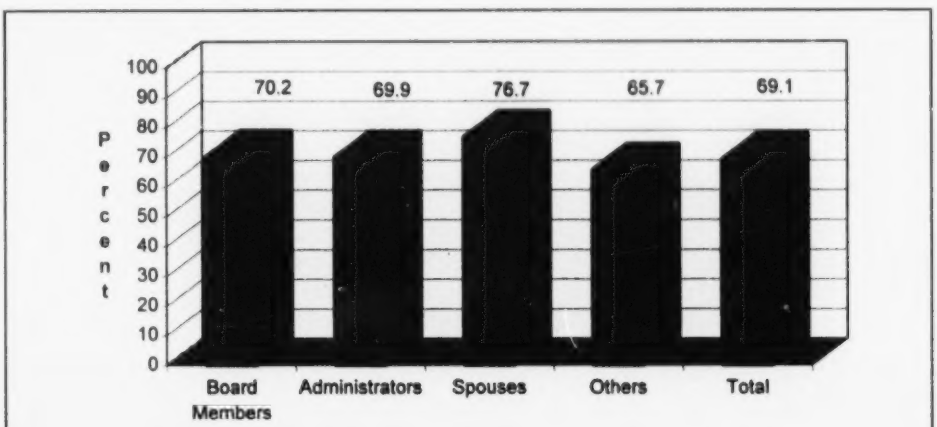

Figure 13. Extent to Which Respondents Believe Students Must Stay in School to Receive/Retain a Driver's License

Almost 70% of the respondents believed the dropout rate would be reduced if students were required to receive a high school diploma or reach the age of 18 in order to receive and retain a driver's license. Administrators were less likely (60.9%) to agree with the proposal. The large number of respondents who agreed with this proposal suggests that it requires further study and discussion by state and local officials. An underlying theme to this response suggests that educators recognize that the road to employment for high school dropouts is difficult and limits opportunities for the state's young people.

ICoVE'S CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations listed herein are the result of perceptions of more than 600 participants at the 63rd Annual Illinois Association of School Boards convention. Convention participants were asked to address thematic issues associated with Education-to-Careers; changes in federal funding; employability/life skill development; education, business, industry and labor partnerships; the role of ICoVE; and school leavers. Based on survey data and written comments, the following conclusions and recommendations emerged.

EDUCATION-TO-CAREERS

Conclusions

- The level of awareness regarding the state's Education-to-Careers initiative appeared to be fairly high. However, administrators were more likely to be aware of this initiative than were board members, spouses and others who responded to the ICoVE survey.

- All survey respondents recognized the important need for youth and adults to further their education by enrolling in advanced postsecondary education/ training.

- School board members, administrators and other IASB convention participants recognized that it is not necessary to prepare all youth and adults for a four-year degree.

- There was a high level of awareness among survey respondents of the difference between school-based and work-based learning initiatives. However, it was unclear whether participants view school- and work-based learning experiences as being beyond those more traditionally offered in the schools.

- Except for administrators, most survey respondents believed students should have work-based learning experiences prior to receiving a high school diploma. Only 19% of administrators believed work-based experiences are an important part of students' learning prior to graduation.

Recommendations

- *While progress is being made with efforts to implement the Education-to-Careers initiative, ICoVE members recommend that the state aggressively support awareness and marketing activities which clarify the various components of this initiative and the strategies intended to make it successful. Marketing efforts should include information that outlines the breadth of strategies being employed to support school- and work-based learning.* One would expect that a large number of participants responding to the 1995 ICoVE survey would have been familiar with the Education-to-Careers initiative. However, individuals not directly involved with the educational community will need to be fully informed of this new initiative and new notions about the life-long connections between school and the workplace. Marketing efforts should include information that make clear the breadth of strategies being employed to support school and work-based learning.

- Elementary and secondary school students must get the career information they need in order to understand the relationship between school and labor market success. In much of the discussion about school reform, emphasis on programs which provide career information to students is limited. Good career information will increase the likelihood that youth will recognize the need to finish high school and consider pursuing advanced postsecondary education and training. *ICoVE members recommend that state and local officials involved with the Education-to-Careers initiative continue to focus on the important role of the schools in the delivery of career development programs provided for the state's youth.*

FEDERAL FUNDING

Conclusions

- Participants attending the IASB convention were generally aware of federal block grant proposals designed to change the way funding is allocated to states and local agencies for education and training.

- A large percentage of respondents believed federal funds distributed through a block grant mechanism should use local need as the most important criteria for that allocation. To a much lesser extent, the state should use specific criteria, specific programs, educational level and agency affiliation as criteria for the distribution of block grant funds.

Recommendation

- New state legislation has established the Illinois Human Resource Investment Council (HRIC) which is designed to consolidate existing agencies in their efforts to centralize job training and preparation. Clearly, individuals are concerned about the number of state programs monitored by eight separate state agencies which creates a chaotic system of workforce development programs and services. The new 33-member HRIC will play a critical role in determining the distribution of federal block grant funds for education and training to local agencies. *ICoVE members recommend that educational agencies at all levels work closely with the HRIC to promote vocational education programs and services designed to assist youth and adults as they transition from school to work.* As the HRIC continues to mature, it will be important for there to be close connections between the educational community and the Council to ensure that schools continue to play a meaningful role in the broader employment and training community.

EMPLOYABILITY/LIFE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Conclusions

- The majority of administrators responding to the ICoVE survey indicated that their districts offer various life skills programs such as balancing family and work, crisis prevention, and interpersonal relationships. However, board members, spouses and others were less likely to have knowledge of their districts offering these types of programs.

- The majority of survey respondents indicated that the schools teach effective skills associated with punctuality and attendance. Ironically, administrators were less likely to identify that their schools taught these skills than were board members, spouses and others.

Recommendation

- It is clear that individuals at all levels recognize the important need for youth and adults to have the basic knowledge, technical and effective skills necessary to be a productive worker, member of a family and member of a local community. As individuals prepare for their future, *ICoVE recommends that schools continue to be cognizant of the important role*

they play in helping youth and adults succeed at work, in the home and in their community. Every effort should be made to incorporate employability and life skills preparation into the educational programs in Illinois schools. Issues associated with connecting academic and vocational experiences in the schools go well beyond activities associated with preparation for work. The development of a relevant school curriculum entails a holistic approach to education which builds upon the unique interests, abilities and aptitudes of youth and adults. The school program is not made up of a group of disparate programs designed for people of certain age or circumstance. Moreover, it is the connection of all the academic, vocational and extracurricular school experiences which help young people prepare for their various adult roles.

EDUCATION, BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND LABOR PARTNERSHIPS

Conclusions

- The majority of survey respondents identified the existence of partnerships between education, business, industry and labor. Data showed increased levels of partnership activity when contrasted with previous ICoVE surveys.

- While a sizable number of respondents indicated that teachers receive inservice for help in establishing and maintaining partnerships in the schools, slightly more than one-third of the administrators reported inservice activity was not occurring.

Recommendation

- *ICoVE recommends that state-level agencies involved in elementary, secondary and postsecondary education continue to establish creative partnerships among education, government, business, industry and labor.* The intent of developing workable partnerships is to involve agencies that can increase the potential for youth and adults to further their education toward the ultimate goal of high-skill, high-wage careers. As a part of the State Board of Education's Vocational Instructor Practicum (VIP), teachers, counselors and administrators can be encouraged to identify opportunities for creating local-level partnerships necessary to improve career awareness, exploration and preparation. Inservice activities should be supported to assist teachers, counselors and administrators to understand their role in establishing and maintaining these partnerships.

ROLE OF ICoVE

Conclusions

- Almost one-quarter of the respondents to the survey believed ICoVE's role involves monitoring, providing advice and assistance and coordinating state activities associated with vocational education.

- The large number of respondents requesting further information about the state's Education- to-Careers initiative and vocational education suggested a continuing interest in learning more about their respective agencies' roles in employment and training activity.

Recommendation

- Traditionally, ICoVE has been involved in providing advice and assistance to education, business, industry, labor and government agencies involved in the state's vocational education program. *ICoVE members should continue to aggressively pursue their role in monitoring, providing advice and assisting in coordinating the state's education and training activity.* As the Illinois Human Resource Investment Council begins its work, it will be important that ICoVE members work closely to assist Council members in understanding the role of elementary, secondary and postsecondary institutions in state-level workforce development policy and practice.

SCHOOL LEAVERS

Conclusions

- The majority of respondents to the ICoVE survey believed students must receive a high school diploma in order to receive and retain a driver's license.

- Administrators were less likely to believe that completion of a high school diploma should be required to receive a driver's license.

Recommendation

- *ICoVE members recommend that an extensive review be completed of various proposals associated with encouraging youth to complete their high school education.* ICoVE encourages completion of high school education for retention of a driver's license. State-level leadership will continue to be necessary to identify new and unique ways to encourage all Illinois youth to complete high school and consider the need for further postsecondary education and training.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
ILLINOIS COUNCIL ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
IASB/IASBO/IASA SURVEY
November 16-18, 1995
Chicago, IL

Your Role:
_____School Board Member
_____Administrator
_____Spouse
_____Other, identify _____

District You Represent:
_____Elementary
_____Secondary
_____Unit
_____Other, identify_____

1. Are you aware of the IL State Board of Education's initiative on Education-to-Careers? ___Yes ___No ___NA
2. Should all students seek postsecondary education/training? ___Yes ___No ___NA
3. Should all students prepare for a four-year college? ___Yes ___No ___NA
4. Do you know the difference between school-based learning and work-based learning? ___Yes ___No (If no, proceed to question 6.)
5. Should students have a work-based learning experience prior to receiving a diploma? ___Yes ___No ___NA
6. Are you aware that the funding mechanism for education will change with federal block grants?
   ___Yes ___No __NA (If no, proceed to question 8.)
7. When block grant funds are appropriated what percentage should be allocated based on
   ____% Local needs ____% Specific criteria ____% Specific programs
   ____% Educational levels ____% Agency affiliation ____% Other
8. Does your school offer life skills programs, e.g. balancing family and work; crises prevention; interpersonal relationships; managing time, energy and financial resources? ____Yes ___No ___Don't Know
9. Private-sector employers say that punctuality and regular attendance are two major areas of concern in the workplace. Are students in your school district being taught that tardiness and absenteeism are not acceptable?
   ___Yes __No ___Don't Know
10. Has your school formed partnerships with business, industry and labor? ___Yes ____No ___Don't Know
11. Are your teachers receiving inservice education on how to establish and maintain partnerships?
    ___Yes ___No ___Don't Know
12. With respect to workforce preparation, what role(s) do you see the Illinois Council on Vocational Education playing in K-12 and postsecondary vocational education?
    _____Oversight of Programs _____Monitoring of Programs _____Program Administration
    _____Advisory _____Overall Coordination _____Other
13. What are your concerns regarding education and workforce preparation? (Use other side, if necessary.)
14. Suppose legislation was passed stating that in order for high school students to receive and retain their driver's license they must stay in school until they receive a diploma or reach the age of 18. Do you think the dropout rate would be reduced?
    ____Yes ___No ___Don't Know
15. Would you like more information about Education-to-Careers and vocational education? ___Yes ___No (If yes, please write your name, address and school district on the back of this questionnaire.)

Appendix B

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